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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER SUCCUMBS TO DOMESTIC PRESSURE, AND  
PAKISTAN CONDUCTS FIVE NUCLEAR TESTS

CLASSIFIED BY ACTING POLCOUNS DAN MOZENA. REASON: 1.5 (B).

¶1. (U) SOMBER AND TIRED LOOKING, PRIME MINISTER NAWAZ SHARIF TOLD HIS NATION MAY 28 EVENING THAT PAKISTAN HAD SUCCESSFULLY EXPLODED FIVE NUCLEAR DEVICES SEVERAL HOURS EARLIER IN THE DAY. A RECURRING THEME THROUGHOUT THE SPEECH WAS THE FAILURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RESPOND ADEQUATELY TO THE INDIAN NUCLEAR THREAT BEGINNING AS FAR BACK AS THE INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST IN 1974 AND AS RECENTLY AS THE TESTS CONDUCTED EARLIER THIS MONTH. NAWAZ SAID IF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAD TAKEN THE INDIAN THREAT SERIOUSLY, THEN PAKISTAN MIGHT NOT HAVE NEEDED TO TEST.

¶2. (U) NAWAZ TRIED TO STEEL HIS NATION FOR TOUGH TIMES AHEAD AND DECLARED THAT HE AND ALL GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY LEADERS WERE READY FOR AN ERA OF AUSTERITY AND SIMPLICITY, STARTING WITH NAWAZ'S GIVING UP THE NEWLY-OPENED AND PALATIAL PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT BUILDING, WHICH HE PROPOSED COULD BE CONVERTED INTO A HOSPITAL, WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY, OR SOME OTHER CHARITY USE. HE URGED PAKISTANIS TO BRACE THEMSELVES FOR DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD AND TO FACE THESE DIFFICULTIES COURAGEOUSLY AND BOLDLY. HE DECLARED PAKISTAN'S OPTIONS OF BECOMING SLAVES OR LEADING HONORABLE AND INDEPENDENT LIVES LEFT PAKISTAN NO CHOICE.

¶3. (U) REFLECTING INDO-PAK TIT-FOR-TAT MENTALITY, NAWAZ SAID PAKISTAN HAD RESPONDED TO INDIA'S MISSILE TESTS WITH ITS OWN TEST OF THE GHAURI MISSILE LAST MONTH, AND PAKISTAN HAS NOW RESPONDED TO INDIA'S FIVE NUCLEAR TESTS WITH FIVE OF ITS OWN. HE DECLARED THAT THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE PAST DAYS IS NOW GONE, AND IF INDIA IS AGGRESSIVE, PAKISTAN WILL FIGHT BACK -- THE ARMED FORCES ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT AND THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS ARE PREPARED TO MEET ANY CHALLENGE. NAWAZ SAID THAT IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS HE WILL AGAIN SPEAK TO THE NATION TO ANNOUNCE A "NATIONAL AGENDA."

¶4. (U) IN A DIPLOMATIC SOP, NAWAZ PRAISED THE CHINESE, WHOM HE CALLED GREAT AND RELIABLE FRIENDS AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE JAPANESE, WHOM HE SAID WOULD HAVE AVOIDED HAVING HAD THEIR CITIES SUBJECTED TO NUCLEAR ATTACK HAD JAPAN HAD NUCLEAR WEAPONS. HE SAID HE WAS GRATEFUL FOR PRESIDENT CLINTON'S FIVE CALLS AND SAID THE PRESIDENT UNDERSTOOD PAKISTAN'S DIFFICULTIES.

15. (C) COMMENT: AT THE END OF THE DAY, NAWAZ FELL VICTIM TO THE HARDLINERS BOTH IN THE OPPOSITION AND WITHIN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT WHO WERE RELENTLESS IN WHIPPING UP A MEDIA FRENZY DEMANDING A PAKISTANI RESPONSE IN KIND. THERE WERE FEW EFFECTIVE DOMESTIC COUNTERVAILING FORCES BUILDING MEDIA AND POPULAR SUPPORT FOR RESTRAINT. NAWAZ'S DECISION TO TEST WAS FUELED BY CONCERNS THAT HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO GIVE HIS FRAGMENTED OPPOSITION THE "NAWAZ-IS-WEAK-ON-INDIA" ISSUE TO COALESCE AROUND IN THEIR BID TO FORCE HIM FROM POWER. IN HIS SPEECH, NAWAZ PLAYED TO PAKISTANI FEARS OF INDIAN EXPANSIONISM AND DISTRUST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW LONG PAKISTANIS WILL RALLY AROUND THE FLAG ONCE INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS KICK IN, FURTHER CHALLENGING THIS ALREADY VULNERABLE ECONOMY. NAWAZ'S NOTION THAT PAKISTANIS WILL "SACRIFICE" BY GIVING UP LONG CHERISHED "RIGHTS" SUCH AS STEALING NATURAL GAS AND ELECTRICITY AND AVOIDING TAXES STRIKE US AS MORE WISHFUL THAN REALISTIC. PAKISTANIS HAVE ALWAYS PREFERRED TALKING ABOUT EATING GRASS (IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY) RATHER THAN ACTUALLY HAVING TO EAT IT.

SIMONS